

Running Dogs

RUBY J MURRAY



BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback

ISBN: 9781921844706

RRP: \$29.95



AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Ruby J. Murray was born in Melbourne. She was educated at Princes Hill Secondary College, the University of Melbourne, La Sorbonne, the Australian National University, and in Jakarta's 40,000 taxis. She has a background in environmental politics and writes regularly for Australian magazines, newspapers, journals and anthologies. *Running Dogs* is her first novel.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. *Running Dogs* is described as being about the power of the stories we tell ourselves, and the damage they can do. Which characters tell themselves the most damaging stories about themselves? Who is in control of the stories that are being told? Whose stories have the most power?
2. At one point in the novel, an expat congratulates the children's mother on dressing the children up as Indonesians for a party whose theme is 'come as your nationality'. "*And they've come as Indonesians? What a nice gesture. And let's face it, right? It's much harder to dress them up Aussie.*" (p.96) What do you think makes a 'real' Indonesian, or a 'real' Australian?
3. Religion and mysticism play large roles in the novel. What are the positive outcomes from the characters' experiences of mysticism and religion? Are there any negative outcomes?
4. What does the nature of the children's faith tell you about how much power they feel they have over their lives?
5. Francesca tells Diana that she has to get over her first world guilt over having servants. "*You have to get over that. Even the servants have servants, here. It's the economy. There's no employment for people otherwise. Think of it as doing them a favour.*" (p.9) What do you think of this attitude?
6. Diana feels responsible for the lives of the children in the orphanage, but when it comes to the lives of the Jordans she behaves as if her hands are tied. Why do you think this is?
7. The idea of individual responsibility, within families, within organisations, within broader human communities, is explored throughout the novel.

REVIEWS

‘Ruby J. Murray has constructed an interesting and complex picture of Indonesia in the 1990s.’

— CHRISTOPHER KOCH

‘Lyrical descriptions clash with harsh imagery to evoke a world of extreme privilege set among that of poverty, fear and political upheaval, where privilege and wealth are not enough protection from familial secrets and shame. *Running Dogs* is a powerful and nuanced debut novel.’ **FOUR STARS**

— *Australian Bookseller & Publisher*

‘Vibrant and startling, *Running Dogs* evokes all the colour, earthiness and glorious confusion of life in Jakarta, a city of passion and constant change.’

— TASH AW

‘poetically sensuous and vividly evocative...This is a wonderfully nuanced first novel, conjuring up the visceral intensity of a crowded Asian country, where things are done differently, and European cultural sensibilities are of tenuous relevance. Highly recommended.’

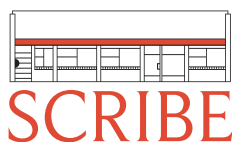
— IAN MCFARLANE, *Canberra Times*

‘Murray is more than just one to watch — she’s one to read, right now.’

— JOHN BAILEY, *The Sunday Age*, *M Magazine*

What do you think our responsibilities are as citizens of a global community? Where do a community’s boundaries end?

8. The function of aid organisations in developing countries is also examined — Petra has come to Indonesia working with one, and is conflicted about her role. What do you think about overseas aid, and the ways in which it is administered?
9. The novel is split into two distinct time periods — the social and political upheaval of Indonesia during 1997-1998, and Indonesia’s more recent history. How much do you think Australians know about Indonesia? Do you consider these parts of the novel to be ‘historical’ or ‘contemporary’? Why?
10. The characters in the novel struggle with defining their sexuality and their gender. How are sexuality and gender different?
11. The father casts a long shadow throughout the novel, though he’s rarely seen. What do you think of the role played by the father in the novel? How has the author demonstrated the impact he has had on the lives of his children?
12. Isaak says to Paul: “If you get too close, it’s hard to see what the picture is. We should stand further back.” (p.237) Is this something true of the whole novel? What do you think the characters are too close to see?
13. If you have travelled, how has it felt to be a foreigner? What has it made you feel about your own country?



Scribe Publications
18–20 Edward Street
Brunswick Vic 3056
T: (03) 9388 8780
F: (03) 9388 8787

Seriously good books.

scribepublications.com.au

AUSTRALIAN SMALL PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR 2011, 2010, 2008, 2006